

Amos Notes

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Introduction:

Amos means “burden” or “burden bearer.”

Amos doesn't include his father or his lineage because he wasn't raised or trained as a prophet or priest. He was a farmer and sheepbreeder. (Amos 7:14)

Amos is contemporary with Hosea and Jonah in the North and Isaiah and Micah in the South.

- Amos lived in the south and travels to the north to Samaria and Bethel to prophecy against the north. He prophesies in a time of economic prosperity in Israel.

A key theme: Amos 5:24.

Chapter 1:

1:1 – “among the sheepbreeders” – Amos 7:14.

- “Tekoa” – A city of Judah, located 11 miles southeast of Jerusalem and 6 miles south of Bethlehem.
- “which he saw” – Amos is a “seer,” which makes him of the older order of prophets in Israel and Judah. (1 Sam. 9:9)
- “concerning Israel” – Amos is from Judah, but God is sending him to speak to Israel.
- “in the days of Uzziah” – About the time of 760-750 BC. (2 Kings 14:23-15:7; 2 Chron. 26)
 - The Assyrian captivity of Israel occurred in 722-721 BC.
- “Jeroboam the son of Joash” – That is Jeroboam II.
 - Jeroboam II brought Israel to its zenith in prosperity, but not in spirituality.
- “the earthquake” – Historically dated between 810-792 BC.
 - Zechariah speaks of this earthquake around 200 years later saying people fled the city at that time. (Zech. 14:5)

1:2 – “The Lord roars from Zion” – Repeated from Joel's prophecy. (Joel 3:16)

- This will be the point of Amos' message.
- “Carmel” – means “the vineyard of God.” This was a very fertile land.

1:3 – “For three...for four” – This is a poetic Hebrew way of speaking about completion.

- “Damascus” – The capital of Syria.
- “threshed Gilead” – The Syrians would grind people to death on threshing floors.

1:4 – “I will send a fire” – This is speaking about the Assyrians.

1:6 – “Gaza” – One of the 5 cities of the Philistines.

- “took captive the whole captivity” – The Philistines sold slaves to Edom who then sold them to Phoenicia, which became wealthy on slave labor.

1:7 – “I will send a fire” – Nebuchadnezzar would eventually destroy the Philistine cities.

1:9 – “Tyre” – The Phoenicians.

- “the covenant of brotherhood” – Hiram had made peace with David. (1 Kings 5:1, 12)
 - Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab will be judged for their mistreatment of Israel.
 - No matter how bad the children of God are, you leave the punishment of them to the Father.
 - “I will bless them that bless you and curse them that curse you.” (Gen. 15)

1:10 – “I will send a fire” – Tyre was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander the Great.

1:11 – “Edom” – Descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob.

- “wrath forever” – There was never full restoration between Jacob and Esau.

1:12 – “devour the palaces” – Edom is now a dry, desolate land.

1:13 – “Ammon” – One of the sons of Lot with his daughter. (Gen. 19:38)

- “ripped open the women with child” – The Ammonites were very cruel.
- “enlarge their territory” – They were brutalizing innocents to advance their nation and wealth.
 - Jordan is still looking at taking the West Bank back from Israel.

1:14 – “I will kindle a fire” – Fulfilled by the Assyrians.

- “Rabbah” – Modern-day Amman, Jordan.

Chapter 2:

2:1 – “Moab” – Another of the sons of with his other daughter. (Gen. 19:37)

2:2 – “I will send a fire” – This is speaking again of Nebuchadnezzar.

2:4 – “Judah” – The southern nation; Amos’ native country.

- Uzziah was a fairly good king leading a prosperous nation at this time.
- “despised the law” – They move from apathy toward God’s law to a direct hatred of it.
- “not kept His commandments” – Judah has sinned against great light.
 - The other nations were reckoned with for injuries done to men, but Judah is reckoned with for indignities done to God.

2:5 – “I will send a fire upon Judah” – Nebuchadnezzar would burn Jerusalem to the ground.

2:6 – “Israel” – Amos comes to his primary message.

- “they sell the righteous for silver” – Jews were permitted to hold another Jew in slavery (more like indentured servitude), but only for 6 years. So instead, the Jewish slave owners were selling their fellow Jews to non-Jews (and for as little as a pair of sandals).

2:8 – “clothes taken in pledge” – The poor were to receive their cloaks back before nightfall because it was all they had. (Deut. 24:12-13)

- “their god” – Israel is in full-blown idolatry at this time.
 - Morally, Israel is at the point of no return.

2:9 – “Amorite” – The immoral tribes of the giants in the land before Israel took Canaan. (Gen. 15:16)

2:10 – “To possess the land of the Amorite” – Israel ended up following in the footsteps of the Amorites.

2:12 – “you gave the Nazirites wine” – The Nazirites were not to cut their hair, touch dead bodies, or drink wine. The people of Israel are deliberately defiling the Godly of the land.

- “Do not prophesy” – They are refusing to hear the Word of God.

2:13 – “I am weighed down by you” – God cannot bear it any longer. The sin of this nation is a burden to Him.

2:14 – “Nor shall the mighty deliver himself” – No military, natural, or technological power can prevail against God’s judgment.

Chapter 3:

3:2 – “You only have I known” – The heavier judgment is coming upon them due to their greater light.

- “To whom much is given, much is required.” (Luke 12:48)

- God chastens the sons that He loves. (Heb. 12:7)

3:3 – “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” – God wants them to be in step with Him.

3:4 – “a lion roar” – A lion roars when the prey has been captured and killed.

3:7 – “reveals His secret to His servants” – This is God’s mercy to His people. He is warning them.

- God is faithful to tell us what we need to know to do His will. “The sheep hear His voice.” (John 10:4)

3:11 – “An adversary” – Speaking of Assyria.

3:12 – “from the mouth of a lion” – A shepherd was required to bring back some piece of a sheep killed by a wild animal to prove that he didn’t take the sheep himself.

3:14 – “Bethel” – Where Jeroboam I set up one of the golden calves.

3:15 – “winter house...summer house” – They are living in prosperity.

- “houses of ivory” – Archeology has uncovered ivory thrones and other items from Samaria.

- Ivory is a sign of the opulence of the nation at this time.

- “the great houses” – This would be like us hearing a prophecy of the destruction of the White House.

Chapter 4:

4:1 – “you cows of Bashan” – He is speaking of the women of Israel.

- “oppress...crush” – Words of physical oppression.

- “Bring wine” – The wealthy aristocracy are living in drunken opulence. And they are supporting their lifestyles on the backs of the poor.

4:2 – “take you away with fishhooks” – Assyria would literally lead their captives away with hooks through their noses, lips, or shoulders.

4:3 – “broken walls” – This speaks of war and a siege of the city.

- 4:4 – “Come to Bethel and transgress” – God is mocking their foreign gods and idolatrous sacrifices.
 - “tithes every three years” – These are the tithes for the poor. (Deut. 14:28; 26:12)
- 4:6-11 – “Yet you have not returned to Me” – Repeated 5 times. (v. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11)
 - This is God’s desire and the reason for these judgments. God chastens the sons that He loves. (Heb. 12:5-11)
 - God’s judgments in the natural realm are to draw people to Himself.
- 4:6 – “cleanness of teeth” – This is speaking of famine. They have no food between their teeth.
 - This alone should be enough to draw the people back to the Lord.
- 4:7 – “withheld rain from you” – This is an obvious sign of God’s displeasure of His people in the land. (Deut. 11:8-17)
- 4:10 – “a plague” – Disease often follows the destruction of war.
- 4:11 – “As God overthrew Sodom” – A supernatural destruction.
- 4:12 – “Prepare to meet your God” – That is what life all about.
 - He is doing all He can to prepare us to meet Him personally.
- 4:13 – “He who forms mountains” – Speaking of God’s omnipotence.
 - “declares to man what his thought is” – Speaking of God’s omniscience.
 - “his thought” – Is this speaking of God revealing the thoughts of people to themselves or God revealing His own thoughts to the people?
 - “treads the high places” – Speaking of God’s omnipresence.
 - “hosts” – God sovereignly controls the armies of angles and men.

Chapter 5:

- 5:1 – “lamentation” – A funeral dirge.
- 5:2 – “the virgin of Israel” – This was God’s desire, but it was not like this anymore.
 - “rise no more” – Israel will never fully regain its previous purity.
- 5:3 – “a hundred shall have ten left” – 90% will be taken.
 - The Latin for “a tenth” is “decimate.”
- 5:4 – “Seek Me and love” – God is still pleading with them.
- 5:5 – “Bethel...Gilgal...Beersheba” – Originally, places where God met His people.
 - God is calling them back to the original relationship. God had freed them from these very idols they are now turning to. (Amos 4:4)
 - “Bethel” – Where God met Jacob. (Gen. 28:10-22; 35:1-7)
 - “Gilgal” – Where Joshua consecrated the people in the land. (Josh. 4:19-20; 5:2-9)
 - “Beersheba” – Abraham spent time in Beersheba. (Gen. 21:31)

- 5:6 – “Seek the Lord and live” – God desires to give us life. (John 10:10)
- “like fire” – Those in Jerusalem who saw the angel of God kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night realized they lived in the presence of a God who is a consuming fire.
- 5:7 – “wormwood” – Bitterness.
- 5:8 – “Pleiades and Orion” – The Jews could tell the seasons by the stars. It was a sign of God’s faithfulness.
- “the waters of the sea” – There are 330 million cubic miles of ocean on the earth.
 - “pours them out on the face of the earth” – Speaking of the hydro-system. 1.5 trillion tons of water fall to the earth in small droplets every day.
- 5:10 – “gate” – The place of government and the judicial system of the city.
- “abhor the one who speaks uprightly” – The nation gets to a place where they hate to hear the truth spoken in the public arena.
 - “speaks uprightly” – The job of the preacher and the prophet.
- 5:11 – “tread down the poor” – Again speaking of the oppression of the poor by the rich. (James 2:6-7)
- 5:13 – “the prudent” – Those who want to deal righteously.
- A time is coming when “the love of many will grow cold.” (Matt. 24:12)
- 5:14 – “the Lord God of hosts will be with you” – This is God’s mercy.
- 5:15 – “it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious” – At a time when the nation is so sinful, their only hope is to throw themselves on the grace of God.
- A restoration in the Church and country will not be a result of us getting everything straight, but of us throwing ourselves back into the arms of a gracious God.
 - “it may be” – This was the hope that turned the Ninevites in repentance. (Jonah 3:9)
- 5:16 – “farmer” – And Amos is a farmer. (Amos 7:14)
- 5:18 – “desire the day of the Lord” – Israel was expecting the day of the Lord to be a judgment on the enemies of Israel and an establishment of them as a nation.
- The mistake they were making was assuming or presuming upon God’s goodness. They thought all the other nations would be judged, but they would be restored to greater prosperity.
 - Christian believers can look forward to the day of the Lord because Jesus has paid all their punishment.
- 5:21 – “I despise your feast days” – This has become more ritual than reflective of a sincere heart to love and please the Lord.
- “do not savor your sacred assemblies” – In the sacrificial system, God would often receive the offerings as a “sweet smelling savor.” But sacrifices are no longer a blessing to the Lord.
 - Ritual without heart is unacceptable.
- 5:24 – “justice run down like water” – As the blood of Christ poured down the cross.
- 5:25-27 – Quoted by Stephen in Acts 7:42-43.

5:25 – “sacrifices and offerings” – Israel was dependant on the sacrificial system before because it meant something to them before the Lord. Now they are turning to idols.

5:27 – “beyond Damascus” – Not just Syria (the world power at that time), but Assyria.

Chapter 6:

6:1 – “at ease in Zion” – The nation of Israel is misinterpreting their present prosperity as God’s blessing when in fact they have turned from God and are nearing judgment.

- “Mount Samaria” – The city was a citadel. They were trusting their military might.
- Assyria sieged the city of Samaria for 3 years.

6:2 – “Calneh” – The capital of Babylon, already destroyed by Assyria.

- “Hamath” – The capital of Syria, already destroyed by Assyria.
- “Gath” – The capital of Philistia, already destroyed by Assyria.
- Israel has become no better than the nations around them.

6:3 – “put off the day of doom” – They say God’s judgments are for the distant future, causing them to have no impact in their own personal lives.

6:4 – “Stretch out on your couches” – Lit. “to sprawl out drunkenly.”

6:6 – “drink wine from bowls” – Larger quantities of alcohol consumed faster.

- This is the typical wine, women, and song...sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll.

6:9-10 – “the dead” – Pictures of the devastation of the siege of Assyria.

- “burn the bodies” – The Bible doesn’t speak against cremation.

6:12 – “horses run on rocks” – The point of no return.

Chapter 7:

7:1 – “God showed me” – This is a vision.

- Amos is a seer. (v. 12)
- “He formed” – God is bring the locusts.
- “king’s mowings” – The first mowed hay would go to the king’s flocks.

7:2 – “forgive, I pray” – The impending judgment breaks Amos’ heart.

7:3 – “the Lord repented” – This comes from a Hebrew root meaning “to sigh.”

- In intercession, the heart of Amos comes into agreement with the heart of God.
- God never changes. He deals with sin one way, but with brokenness and confession another way. Therefore, as Amos confesses this, God responds accordingly.

7:4 – “conflict by fire” – Most scholars attribute this plague to a drought that leads to a famine.

7:7 – “plumb line” – A simple tool used to determine a straight line. (Zech. 4:10)

- At the point, Amos seems to see the justice in God’s judgment.
- In Rev. 11:1, a reed was given to an angel to measure the temple and the worshippers that gathered there.

- 7:8 – “Amos, what do you see?” – God calls Amos by name. He speaks to him personally. (John 10:3)
- “not pass by them anymore” – God, in His mercy, has to this point overlooked their sin and the consequences it deserves.
 - The nation of Israel had been established according to the standard of the Law. But now that they have abandoned that standard, they have lost their straightness and are therefore awaiting destruction.
- 7:9 – “house of Jeroboam” – The lineage of the northern kings. (2 Kings 15:8-11)
- 7:10 – “conspired against you” – Amaziah is accusing Amos of causing political unrest due to his religious position.
- When the false religions, in step with the political powers of the day, turn against the true worship of God, persecution is sure to follow.
 - “not able to bear all his words” – Unbelievers cannot bear the truth.
- 7:11 – “thus Amos has said” – Amaziah does not attribute this prophecy to God, but to Amos alone.
- 7:12 – “Go” – Amaziah is trying to make Amos leave Israel.
- “eat bread” – The payment of a prophet. He is saying that Amos is a hireling.
- 7:14 – “I was no prophet” – Amos’ authority comes from his calling. He is nothing on his own.
- In God’s service, it is necessary to be drafted rather than try to enlist.
 - God’s call will get our attention. God has no problem getting through to us. The problem is us responding to what we know He has asked of us.
 - God uses plain, ordinary, uneducated people to do His will. (Acts 4:12; 2 Cor. 4:7)
- 7:15 – “as I followed the flock” – God can use anybody, but He typically calls workers.
- 7:16 – “hear the word of the Lord” – Amos is speaking directly to Amaziah.
- Amaziah was a spiritual ruler in Israel. People didn’t commonly speak to him like this.
- 7:17 – “You wife... Your sons and daughters” – Amaziah is going to feel the greatest measure of God’s judgment in His own family.

Chapter 8:

- 8:1 – “summer fruit” – The last fruit to be taken in the harvest. This fruit would have to be eaten quickly so that it wouldn’t go bad.
- “and is come” – Lit. “the last cutting.” This is a play on words as God takes the summer fruit from Israel.
 - “not pass by them anymore” – Repeated from Amos 7:8.
- 8:3 – “the temple” – This seems to be referring to the idolatrous temple set up in Bethel.
- 8:5 – “the New Moon” – The Jewish feast days were tied to the lunar calendar. In Israel, those feast days were perverted to the worship of their idols. Yet even then, they can’t wait to get on with their business.
- “Falsifying the scales” – Unjust business practices.
 - They will do anything for personal prosperity.

8:6 – “the bad wheat” – The sweepings off the dirt of the threshing floors. It was illegal to sell the chaff mixed with dirt.

- The poor were becoming poorer and the rich were becoming richer. (James 2:6)

8:7 – “never forget any of their works” – God knows.

- In the letters to the churches in Rev. 2-3, God repeats “I know your works.”
- As believers, we are no longer judged according to our works, but according to the sacrifice of Jesus.

8:9 – “darken the earth” – During Amos’ ministry (790-736 BC), there were two lunar eclipses in 763 BC and 784 BC. One eclipse was accompanied by an earthquake.

- This may also be pointing to the end of the age when the sun will not give its light.
- It is interesting that as Christ died, God giving His only Son, the day was darkened and accompanied by an earthquake. This whole scene of God’s wrath and judgment has already been poured out on Christ for those that believe in Him.

8:11 – “famine...of hearing the words of the Lord” – It is not that the Word isn’t there, it just isn’t being heard or heeded.

- Even in Revelation, many will hear the gospel directly from an angel and reject it anyway. (Rev. 14:6)

8:12 – “wander from sea to sea” – From the Mediterranean Sea to the Sea of Galilee.

- Unwillingness to hear God’s word leads to restlessness...even in the Church.
- “shall not find it” – Because they don’t really want to do what it says.

8:13 – “fair virgins...young men” – The most powerful and vibrant.

- “faint from thirst” – Isa. 40:30-31
- “thirst” – The thirst for truth and the meaning of life. (John 4:14)
- People will drink from any unclean hole to try to satisfy their spiritual need.

8:14 – “your god” – Idolatry.

- Idolatry clogs the spiritual arteries.

Chapter 9:

9:1 – “the lintel” – That which keeps the roof from falling into the doorway.

- “not get away” – They have cut themselves off from any chance for help.

9:2 – “I will bring them down” – “Where can I go from Your presence?” (Ps. 139:7-12)

9:3 – “Carmel” – Known for its caves and forests.

9:6 – “He who builds His layers” – God is sovereign over all. The only part of the creation that is out of His order is humans.

9:7 – “Ethiopians” – Unbelieving Gentiles.

9:8 – “not utterly destroy” – It is God’s mercy to preserve a remnant.

9:9 – “sift the house of Israel” – This happened for decades with the Diaspora.

- “not the smallest grain shall fall” – God will lose none of His children.

9:11 – “tabernacle of David” – A son of David will reign in Israel again.

- This is looking to the restoration of the nation.

9:13 – “overtake the reaper” – As a result of the over abundant harvest, they will still be harvesting when they are preparing to plow the next year.

- “the hills shall flow” – The overflow of the wine vat will actually make the mountains flow.
 - This is opposed to when the hills melt in God’s judgment. (v. 5)

9:15 – “no longer shall they be pulled up” – Looking to the future blessing on Israel.